

gating influence of the Japan current is not felt and all the rigors of an Arctic climate are encountered. Reports from thoroughly competent prospectors are to the effect that the placers and quartz ledges are of unusual richness; but because of the brevity of the working season and the enormous distance over which supplies have to be taken, they cannot be worked profitably. On the other hand, much work was done last year, especially on the placers, several thousand miners having spent the summer along the Yukon, and many of these men are preparing to return the present season. The quartz ledges in the vicinity of Sitka and in the interior back from Sitka and Wrangell were first discovered, and have been worked successfully on a small scale. It will take several years to determine the fact whether the quartz ledges of the interior are sufficiently rich to make mining there profitable under the many disadvantages surrounding it.

The greatest and most available resource of Alaska is the abundance of food fish to be found in the streams and in the waters along the coast. From June until September the fresh-water streams, from the great Yukon to the little brooks flowing from melting glaciers, are crowded with salmon and trout, while their presence in the bays and adjacent sea is indicated by the leaping of herds of porpoises pursuing them for food. Were it not for their destruction by these ravenous fish, and the fact that but a small percentage of the spawn lives to reach deep water, the sea and bays in the vicinity of these rivers would become unnavigable. In the spawning season they ascend the streams in such numbers as to render fording extremely difficult. There are five distinct species as classified by the inhabitants, though no scientific classification has yet been made. Early in June the Quinnat (a very fine fish, called Chowchou by the Russians,) begins to run, followed soon by the Kikoff. In July appears the Crassena Rubia (red-fleshed), and in August the Garbosha (humpbacked), followed later in the season by the Kischutch, or black-mouthed. The last is considered the finest table fish, though the Garbosha, which is coarse and unfit for canning, is the favorite with the Indians, and is cured by them in great quantities for their winter food. There are already half a dozen canneries at work, several of which were built the past year, and the Alaska pack is becoming quite a factor in the market. The possible expansion of this industry is practically unlimited. Large quantities are packed in barrels by the various fur and trading companies. Off Fox and Shumagim islands, at the southern extremity of the Alaskan Peninsula, cod fishing is carried on quite extensively. Three companies in San Francisco employ twenty vessels in this work, catching about 2,000 tons annually. In this vicinity there are a number of good banks, with a depth of water varying from thirty to sixty fathoms. In the eastern end of Behring Sea is a bank covering an area of 18,000 square miles, which has a depth of fifty fathoms, and on every portion codfish are abundant. The cod is found from the Straits of Fuca as far north as latitude 59 degrees, or the southern limit of

floating ice in Behring Sea, having been caught at Nootka, Sitka, Lituya Bay, Yak-etat Bay, Cook's Inlet, throughout the Aleutian Islands, the Alexandrian Archipelago and in the Okhotsk Sea. The black cod, which is now attracting much attention, and is especially abundant in the vicinity of Queen Charlotte Islands and some distance to the northward, is superior to the cod of Labrador; so also is the fish caught near the Shumagim Islands. Halibut abound, but have never been caught in large numbers for the market. The Indians dry them for food. They range from 40 to 500 pounds in weight, and are caught without difficulty. There are many other species of fish, valuable for food or oil, which will all furnish their quota to the wealth which will be drawn from Alaska in the future.

The area of Alaska is computed at 600,000 square miles, more than 20,000 of which are comprised in two great archipelagoes—the Aleutian, extending westerly from the extremity of the peninsula nearly to Asia, and the Alexandrian, following the coast south from Cross Sound till it merges in the archipelago bordering the coast of British Columbia. By the latest authorities the native population, which has evidently been heretofore underestimated, is given as 30,000, divided into three general classes—the Innuits of the Yukon region, the Aleutians, and the Sitkans of the Alexandrian Archipelago, the last being subdivided into half a dozen families or tribes. In this estimate no account is taken of the comparatively limited number of Esquimaux inhabiting the extreme northern, or Arctic, shores, about whom practically nothing is known. The customs of the Sitka Indians are an interesting study yet open to some enthusiastic ethnologist. Of their religious ideas nothing definite is known, except that they entertain a belief in a multitude of spirits, both good and evil, and that they seem more inclined to propitiate the evil ones than to court the favor of the good. The only chance the departed spirit of an Indian has for future felicity comes through the cremation of his body, and to this friends of the defunct brave zealously attend. In the rear of his house is built a pile of wood upon which the body is laid, having been removed from the house through a hole in the roof specially cut for that purpose. The body is carefully covered with a blanket, now that blankets can be had, and near it are deposited the trinkets, finery and arms of the deceased. The pile is then ignited, and as it blazes a doleful chant is sung by a hired band of masked men, who keep time to their wailing music by beating upon a board with sticks. When a murderer has been killed by the victim's friend the two bodies, provided the vengeance has been swift enough and the two families are satisfied, are cremated under one blanket, and as the smoke from the burning bodies ascends in one column, so the hearts of the contending families are united, and the compact of peace is sealed.

Among the curious customs of these people is the use of the "Totem Stick," an Indian coat-of-arms, as distinctive and as zealously guarded from dishonor as that hanging in any European baronial hall. The totem stick